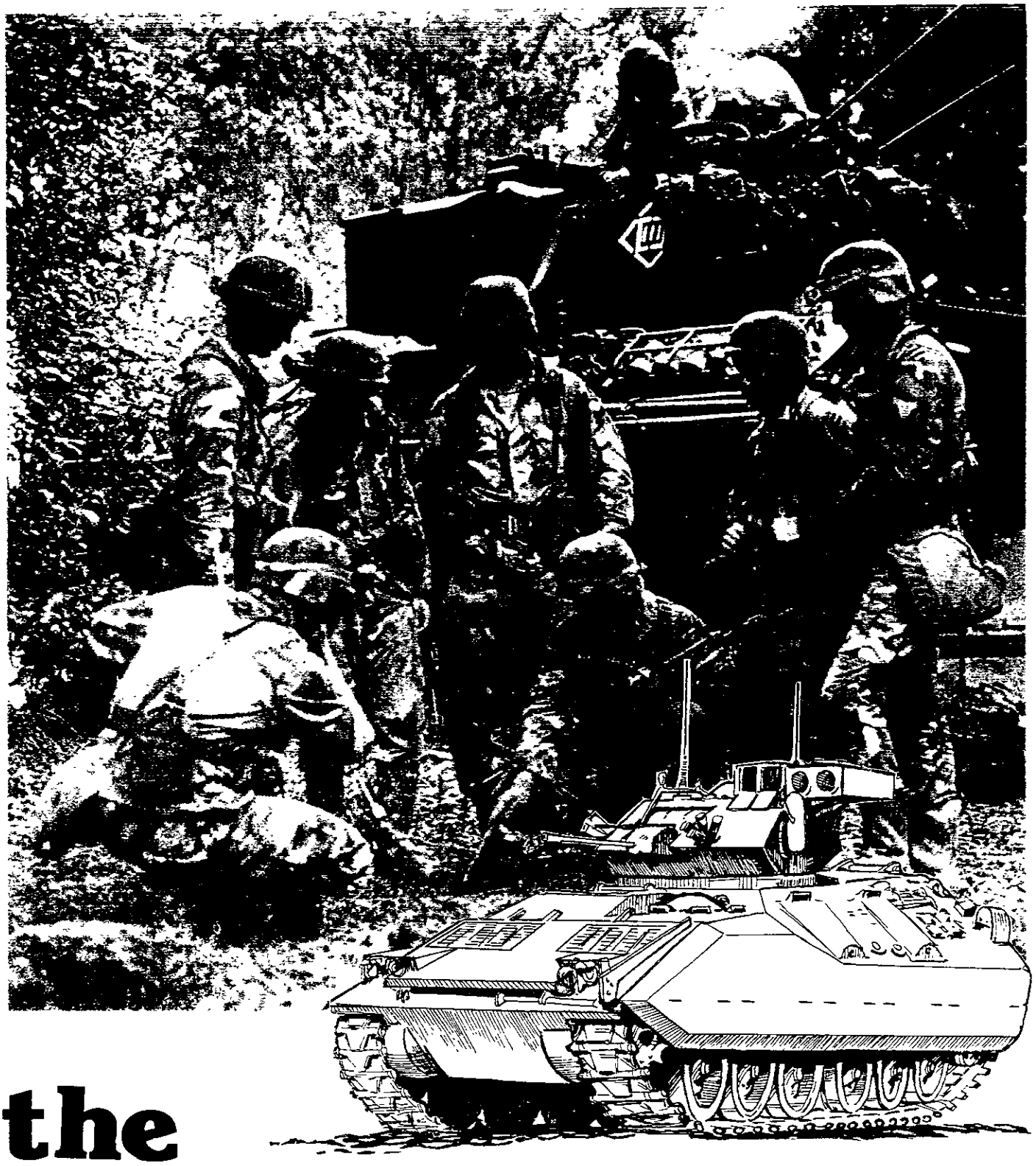

the BRADLEY challenge

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The challenge the M2 Bradley infantry fighting vehicle (IFV) has presented is far-reaching and fundamental for all leaders at platoon level, from the platoon leader on down. The essence of this challenge lies in overcoming the dichotomy between the mounted element and the dismounted element and forming the two into one team capable of fulfilling the Bradley's infantry mission.

Accomplishing this mission implies the most demanding aspect of the Bradley concept—that of training the soldiers in crew drills that will enable them, through cross-training, to retain the traditional skills of infantrymen as they move through the rank and position structure of 11M soldiers.

Mounted versus dismounted is a constant theme when a platoon leader attempts to understand, define, and implement the Bradley concept: The M2 can destroy other vehicles, but its truly unique and primary role on the battlefield is its dismounted function.

Where, then, does the priority in training, tactics, and leadership lie when a platoon leader has an infantry-carrying vehicle that has far more measurable kill capability than the troops it transports? This is the complex challenge the Bradley platoon leader faces in trying to wargame his place on the fluid battlefield of the future.

A platoon leader fresh out of the Army's system of schools must be prepared for a considerable amount of on-the-job training, especially in tactics. He will quickly find that his job requires an understanding of armor, improved TOW vehicle (ITV), and infantry platoons.

The instruction a future platoon leader receives in the Bradley Commander's Course is a good and necessary introduction to the Bradley in a technical sense. But this training is oriented more toward the track commander than the platoon leader or company commander. The Infantry Officer Basic Course and the Ranger Course give a lieutenant an excellent background in "light" or "straight-leg" Infantry operations, but the only preparation he receives for a Bradley unit is one week of a mechanized infantry field training exercise (FTX), which uses M113s.

He does not truly grasp the amount of firepower his platoon has until he sets up his first full scale defense, such as the live fire exercise at the National Training Center (NTC). As he prepares to receive and give his operations order, he finds that he has to emplace or check target reference points (TRPs), maximum engagement lines, range cards, sectors of fire, final protective lines (FPLs) or principal directions of fire (PDFs), left and right limits, and the like for 18 crew-served weapons, along with his fire support and obstacle plan. A Bradley platoon has more raw combat power than a light rifle company, and the corresponding difficulties in their employment.

On the offense, the platoon leader's tasks are equally complex, and offensive tactics demand quick reactions and decisions. Because of the Bradley platoon's firepower and flexibility, the platoon leader must evaluate the situation rapidly and decide how he will use his mounted and dismounted elements. Usually, he simply will not have enough time to analyze the situation thoroughly.

A hasty attack or chance encounter, however, presents the question of when, or whether, to dismount. Should the platoon use its vehicle firepower, speed, and mobility to defeat the enemy? Or should the dismount element be sent out to get in among the enemy with the Bradleys in support? Or should the dismount element stay with the Bradleys in a hide position if the platoon should encounter a tank unit in limited terrain (where the TOW is of little or no use)? Such split-second choices often present themselves while the platoon leader's vehicle is moving at speeds up to 45 miles per hour.

In a deliberate attack, the platoon leader has at least four avenues of approach in maneuvering against the enemy: Remain mounted until contact, use his dismount element on the same avenue to clear the route for the mounted element, use different avenues for the mounted and dismounted elements to assault the objective, or use the Bradleys as a base of support while the dismount element assaults and clears the objective.

DIFFICULT OPTION

When the decision-making narrows to the most basic yet difficult option—whether he should stay with the vehicles or dismount with the ground element—the platoon leader has a difficult task. He is trained for the traditional ground aspect of Bradley infantry tactics in which he can make his presence felt, face to face, leading by example. Yet if he dismounts, he loses substantial control over his most powerful and mobile asset. He also loses his two-net communication capability and his vision of the battlefield, especially at night (with the M2's thermal night sight).

The best position for the platoon leader depends, of course, upon METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time). Because of the possible loss of momentum in a hasty dismount—a chance or unplanned contact, for example—just the time it takes for him to dismount and be replaced could be costly to his unit.

In a deliberate dismount, the platoon leader will probably want to be on the ground, because this effort becomes the platoon's main focus.

Time and focus, then, determine his positioning. For example, the depth of an obstacle in an in-stride breach equates to the time necessary to reduce the obstacle and thereby becomes a major factor in the platoon leader's positioning. If the obstacle can be breached quickly, there is no need for him to dismount.

The requirement for a separate tactics course for new platoon leaders assigned to M2 units, or even for commanders going from light to mechanized units, becomes more evident as one delves into the complexities of Bradley infantry tactics.

The duality of the mounted versus the dismounted roles also increases the amount of knowledge a noncommissioned officer (NCO) in MOS 11M needs, when compared to an 11B, as he moves up through the ranks. A sergeant, for instance, is expected to hold one of two distinct positions—either gunner or dismount team leader. The difference between these two

jobs is fundamental, as is the training inherent in both.

A BFV gunner is a technician on a complex weapon system, and he is responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment—and for the M2 driver as well. His abilities, especially in the field, are taxed far differently from those of a traditional sergeant in the infantry.

To be proficient, he needs extensive training. He must be able to engage moving targets with a burst-on-target cannon (where no round strikes the same place twice) while on the move at ranges out to and beyond 1,800 meters, destroy tanks using an antiarmor missile at 3,750 meters, maintain three different weapon systems, and perform other tasks normally associated with tank and ITV gunners. And through all this, he is also expected to stay sharp in his role as a straight-leg infantry leader.

Although the Bradley platoon members have more to work with than their predecessors had with M113s, they actually have less with which to handle their main mission—that of dismount operations. The M113 can carry nine men and a crew of two, the M2 carries only six men plus three specialized crewmen. Even at full strength, the Bradley platoon, by doctrine, dismounts only 18 11Ms. Yet the requirements given the platoon's "ground pounding" section remain the same as those of the larger dismount section of the M113 platoon. These men on the ground have always proved critical in combat. Tracks can secure an objective, but only infantrymen can seize and hold it.

IMPROVED QUALITY

Quantity, however, is not nearly as crucial as quality, and quality is improved by the M2's ability to carry the fight to the battlefield—along with its dismount element. This allows the dismounted soldier to carry more weapons and ammunition, because he will rarely operate more than two kilometers from his vehicle or, even less often, carry out extended patrols of more than 12 hours. The 11M soldier will therefore be less fatigued when he begins his main task of closing with and destroying the enemy, because he has done most of the "closing with" riding in a vehicle.

The smaller dismount section can therefore handle as much firepower as their light infantry brothers: Three M60 machineguns, six squad automatic weapons, and three Dragons on the ground. (The Bradley dismount soldier has been called the "lightest" infantry in the U.S. Army; all he needs to carry is his ammunition, because he has a 26-ton "rucksack" working nearby in which to carry the rest of his gear.)

The extra work load and extra abilities that are expected of 11M soldiers point to the need for intensive training and cross-training. The fewer soldiers, the more essential it is for the individual to become competent in all aspects of his trade, from Dragon gunner to team leader. Each Bradley vehicle dismount team must be able to function in the unit's full range of requirements, from bounding overwatch to land navigation (which is quite difficult after leaving a closed-in troop compartment).

Although flexibility has always been the watchword of the infantry, flexibility is rooted in training. Therein lies the challenge to the Bradley leader—to consistently, strenuously develop and sustain his troops in dismount tactics—and this is the driving purpose behind his platoon's mission.

Cross-training in crew and dismount skills can be conducted using readily available resources. The best technique for sustaining dismount skills is to hold field training exercises (FTXs) without vehicles. These are cost effective and allow for the training of pure infantry tactics. To be truly effective, however, these exercises must include all members of the platoon—the crewmen cannot be left behind to pull maintenance in the motor pool.

Many of the BFV crew requirements can be trained in the motor pool by practicing the Bradley Gunnery Skills Test in Field Manual 23-1. Cross-training drivers in gunnery requirements during these periods is particularly fruitful.

OPPORTUNITY TRAINING

This is great opportunity training, but it can be handled more efficiently if specific times for it are entered on the training schedule and the resources are coordinated under the supervision of the company and platoon master gunners. The use of simulators such as the U-COFT (unit conduct of fire trainer) and the SIMNET (simulations network) increases crew proficiency. It is also valuable as an orienting and sustaining tool for non-crewmen.

The biggest weakness is often in the skills of the dismount element, because everyone in the platoon, from private to lieutenant, tends to focus upon the vehicles with all the capabilities and maintenance associated with them. FTXs for the dismount soldiers should therefore be emphasized. This "light" field training has first-rate benefits for all, but especially for the staff sergeant Bradley commanders who normally remain in the turret and are not expected to dismount at all during tactical play. This "ground pounder" training will enable them to practice leading by example, the "Follow Me" professionalism that has always set the infantry sergeant apart.

Squad training requirements for the dismount soldiers are especially difficult for a Bradley unit, because crew slots take priority. Gunner and commander positions often claim the platoon's most experienced NCOs. Likewise, the driver slots claim the most promising, best motivated lower ranking enlisted men. And the crew members, once in garrison, are generally lost from dismount training because of maintenance or crew drill.

This often leaves a smaller, less experienced pool of instructors for classes or activities at squad level, especially if the platoon does not have its full complement of NCOs.

A good technique for individual training in garrison is to pool assets and instructors at company level. Although this breaks down the traditional squad integrity in which individual training is led by the squad leader, it does make for the most productive training.

When dealing with the Bradley concept, this re-defining of

accepted norms is, in fact, a constant theme, and the most difficult to accept for many has been the breakdown of the squad as the fundamental building block of the infantry. The delineation of 11Ms into squads is quite blurred and the split along dismounted and mounted lines is the primary cause.

The structure of the Bradley platoon is evidence of this breakdown. By doctrine (which was revised in January 1990), the platoon is organized into two mounted sections and two dismounted squads. This has a tremendous effect on squad level leadership and training. Each of the two staff sergeant Bradley commanders is now responsible for two M2s and four men and the two dismount squad leaders have nine soldiers each. This further differentiates the training requirements of the 11M NCO, who holds a position analogous to that of a staff sergeant in an armor unit as he progresses in rank. The M2 crewmen are further differentiated, because they are no longer in a squad but in a section.

Although this is a necessary development, we must be careful to ensure that these staff sergeants and Bradley commanders continue to lead their soldiers in the traditional infantry tactics to avoid further solidifying the crew-dismount split.

The best solution is for all four staff sergeants to be considered equivalent to squad leaders, with shared responsibilities across distinct squad or section lines and where leaders do not guard their own turf but work together to train all of the platoon's troops. A balance must be struck and enforced if these leaders are to remain competent enough to train in all aspects of the infantry.

The Bradley infantry fighting vehicle is an excellent machine that will help the platoon accomplish its missions—if the soldiers who operate and ride in the vehicle are properly trained. But the Bradley's capabilities and limitations must be put in perspective. True, it does not swim as well as the M113; it has a high profile; and it does not take a 125mm round as well as a tank does. It is equal to the job of keeping up with the M1 Abrams whether it is in the swamps and forests of southeast Georgia, the desert and mountains of the Mojave, or now in the Middle East. Even the relatively small number of dismount soldiers in a Bradley platoon is not a major drawback.

The number of dismounted soldiers complements the mission essential tasks of a mechanized unit, even when a Bradley platoon is cross-attached to a tank-heavy team. These tasks are principally obstacle breaching, local security patrols, listening and observation posts, antiarmor ambushes and hunter-killer teams, reconnaissance patrols, covering a dismounted avenue of approach, and clearing an objective. (Local security is not a problem if 360-degree scanning is performed by the team's vehicle thermal sights.)

The platoon, to perform these missions, must maintain a certain training standard, and that standard is clearly established by a list of collective and individual tasks in the Bradley Platoon ARTEP 7-247-11-MTP.

The Bradley concept provides the mechanized infantry with tremendously increased organic firepower and mobility. This mobility in turn furthers the footsoldier's protection and flexibility, counteracting the potential threat posed by such fighting vehicles as the Soviet BMP.

The challenge implicit in this expanded firepower is in training the infantryman in his essential tasks. This can be done without degrading the critical skills of the traditional infantryman, even as the individual soldier moves from crew member to dismount element and back again while proceeding through the 11M rank and position structure. The successful employment of the Bradley platoon's various assets is dependent on this cross-training effort for the entire platoon, from private to lieutenant.

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